

Sandy Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Thursday 20 January 2022 at 7pm via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Present: Nigel Aldis, Robert Baker, Richard Barlow, Anne Elliott-Flockhart, Tim Gardiner, Amanda Gibson (Chair), Arnold Gilpin, Joanna Hewitt, Ruth Lock, Chris Patterson and Anne Ramsay.

In Attendance: Jemma McLean from BRCC.

Apologies: There were none.

1. Review and approve the minutes from 17 December 2021

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

2. Review open actions

The Chair talked the group through the open actions list that had been circulated with the agenda. All open actions were being progressed and there were no issues with completing.

3. Guest – Jemma McClean from BRCC

Jemma introduced herself and then took questions from the group.

A member asked what to do if the neighbourhood plan consultation came up with an idea that is not in alignment with Town Council wishes. Jemma replied that there should be a strong tie with the Town Council, with regular updates provided so there shouldn't be any major surprises. The NP is about representing residents views so Town Council should be happy to work together for a common objective.

A member asked if there was a specific level of engagement needed to ensure that the NP was representative of the town. Jemma responded that there is no specific target figure. Engagement is harder in larger towns. You just need to show you have tried to reach all groups. It's good to review your results after each consultation to see if you are missing any groups. Make sure you keep evidence of engagement – publicity, posters and social media posts. Jemma noted that the group had had good engagement so far which was encouraging.

A member asked if there was any way to meet certain demographics. Jemma replied that younger people prefer online engagement, but older people prefer other ways of engagement. She recommended reaching out to community groups and utilising what already exists in Sandy. Publicise things in shops, cafes, and schools. If you don't get a good response, extend deadlines, and try alternative methods. It's a case of

trial and error as every town is different. NP's who have a good response rate are ones that have used different approaches.

A member noted that we have done our initial consultation with residents and businesses and asked what the best approach for the next stage was. Should we be doing more detailed consultation, or should we be reflecting the results of the first stage back to residents to ensure we've understood what they have told us. Should we hold a large event or do smaller short surveys? Jemma responded that that was up to the group. Some groups do one big event, other's do smaller topic-based ones, the only problem with that is if you get someone interested in all the topics they might not come out to lots of smaller consultations.

A member asked if it's best for the group to organise events themselves or use consultants to facilitate them. Jemma replied that some consultations, such as the Green Infrastructure Plan would be facilitated by BRCC in conjunction with the group, but other events would be organised by the group.

Another member asked how we manage residents expectations, such as a request for a swimming pool, which is not in a NP's remit to promise. Jemma responded that you could document that this was a wish of residents and explain why it's not possible at this time. But it's good to put in the plan as things may change in the future and it could become feasible.

A member noted that Sandye Place was a hot topic and could distort any feedback we may receive, how do we cope with that? Jemma replied that we should give people an opportunity to comment, then paint a vision of what could happen but what might need to happen to facilitate those visions. The group will need to ask questions in a non-leading way but in the next stage of consultation you want more yes/no, agree/disagree questions rather than free text questions as these are easier to analyse.

A member noted that we need to ask residents if they want certain things how do they want things to happen. For example, if they want to stop HGV's going through town we need to know if there is any other route those HGV's could take to get to their destinations. **Richard** volunteered to assess HGV traffic and make a note of the hauliers that use the route and get in touch with them to ask some questions. Jemma noted that the how was a fair point, residents are more open to some change, e.g: more housing, if it helps to deliver something else that is needed like retirement

housing. **Nigel** reported that he had some information regarding HGV's that he would share with the group.

A member asked when the 2021 Census results would be available, Jemma replied that she thought it was May 2023 but would double check.

The Chair thanked Jemma for her time. Jemma said she was happy to answer questions at any time, look at any documents we produce and is happy to attend meetings. The Chair asked if members had further questions after the meeting to let herself or Anne EF know so they could be forwarded to Jemma.

4. Business Survey Results

Tim talked the group through the business survey results that had been circulated prior to the meeting. There had been 27 responses in total but not all businesses answered every question.

The results were interesting, particularly that businesses rated the transport links as the most advantageous reason for being based in Sandy. It was also interesting to hear that one of the businesses lost clients as there were no school places for their children.

As the business questionnaire went out to businesses in the High Street, Sunderland Road, Sand Lane and outlying businesses, it would have been useful to know the location of the businesses to ascertain which found the lack of footfall disadvantageous, for example.

It might be useful to hold further consultation with High Street businesses and Industrial estate businesses to drill down further.

A member asked if Sunderland Road Industrial estate was privately owned as the potholes on the estate were shocking. It was noted that Mid-Beds Council sold off the estate around 10 years ago, but the roads should come under Highway's jurisdiction. **Amanda** volunteered to try and report on Fix My Street to see what response we get from CBC Highways.

Tim informed members that the all the data from the business surveys is on the Dropbox.

5. Working Group Updates & Plans

a) Environment

Anne R had sent out a report and link to the Green Infrastructure Plan initial survey prior to the meeting. It was noted that it was quite difficult to match the aspirations to the map as you couldn't view them side by

side. Anne will report this back to BRCC. We will need to promote this on our social media accounts. We could add this to our Linktree account and maybe have a display board in the library. BRCC are also hoping to have a drop-in session at the council offices.

A member asked if it would be possible to put something in Barclays Bank window, at which point Joanna gave an update that Barclays have signed the lease over to a new Landlord, there is building survey taking place shortly. At present they are happy for us to continue to use the window and Jed will be adapting the paintings for us soon. It was also noted that Tesco had display space that could be utilised in the future.

A member noted that the Kingfisher way had been taken out as not feasible, but whilst it might not be feasible at the moment it was still deemed to be aspirational. Anne thought this had gone back in but will check with BRCC.

A member asked if 2 weeks was sufficient for the initial survey given the difficulties at looking at the maps and lists. Anne replied that the initial survey had a short timeframe to allow for longer for the second phase of the consultation.

Anne R will go back to BRCC with the groups concerns and ask about dates for the drop-in at the council as we need to ensure members can be available to help.

b) Town Centre & High Street

The Chair had sent out a report prior to the meeting. The group is looking to hold a meeting with CBC for feedback on the groups current thinking.

A member asked if someone from Highways could attend to discuss the HGV situation. The Chair reported that this request has already been made and she will provide an update after the next meeting with CBC on 25 January.

It was noted that the Sandye Place issue might concern more than one of the working groups and might need to be centrally discussed at some point.

It was mentioned in the report about making the post office a community asset, but community assets are more about buildings

rather than services so we might need to find some other way of highlighting the importance of keeping this service in Sandy.

c) Housing & Design

Arnie had sent out a report prior to the meeting. It was noted that whilst there is no overarching design for the whole of Sandy, there were areas within Sandy which had their own styles, and the group were looking into this further.

There is scope to move industry land to free up land for housing on current industrial land. And the possibility of creating a community space at Sandye Place which could involve moving the library there which would free up land in the town centre for redevelopment.

Arnie mentioned creating a map for land use for information gathering. A member noted that it would be useful for everyone to use the same base map for these exercises. The Chair reminded the group that there were several maps on the Dropbox which could be used as a starting point and that requests for additional mapping can be made to CBC via the Chair or Anne EF.

d) Infrastructure

Chris had sent out a report prior to the meeting. It was noted there is lots of overlaps with other groups. There wasn't much about infrastructure mentioned in the initial surveys, but it was clear that transport links are important to residents.

The Chair thanked everyone for their work and noted that all groups need to start thinking about the next level of consultation.

6. Budget & Grant Funding Applications

The Chair noted that we have used ~£2500 from the budget allocated for 2021/22, the Council have proposed to top up the pot in next year's budget back to £10,000.

We have used £1,500 from the £10,000 Locality grant that is available to us. With a further £1,500 to be earmarked for Phase II of the GI Plan update that BRCC are doing.

The High Street & Social Infrastructure Improvement grant application needs to be completed by the End of March; this would bring us up to £15,000 in additional funding for Technical Support if we are successful with our bid. The Chair is meeting with CBC officers to find out what information they have that could support the application. Locality will

write the application with information that we provide. The Chair will share the application with the group before it is submitted.

Other grants can be applied for to create Design Codes or a Town Master Plan which we should also consider in the next few months.

7. 2022 Events Plan

a) Eve Appeal – 19 March 2022 – Anne EF informed the group that this will be a smaller event than originally anticipated therefore there might not be much to gain from having a presence at it. However, all members were invited to attend personally. It was decided not to have a stand at this event.

b) Spring Market – 10 April 2022

c) Carnival – 11 June 2022

d) NP Specific event – It was agreed that we should hold a large event at some point, possibly during July or August, date to be confirmed at the next meeting.

A member noted that the Sandy Show is being held on 3 September at the Conservative Club and Sandy Historical Research Group will be holding an event on the same date at the Baptist Hall, in the hope that footfall from one event will attend the other. It was put to the group that we could share the Baptist Hall to gain from footfall on this day.

There was some concern that this may push our timelines out. It was noted that we could start writing policies before all the evidence is in and we could use the upcoming events to test ideas. It was decided to leave the timelines as they are for now.

The **Communications working group** would consider a time and location for a larger event.

8. AOB

The Chair noted that a resident has expressed an interest in joining the infrastructure working group.

9. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 17 February at 7pm location to be advised based on the Groups preference, please let Anne EF know which you would prefer.